

University of Florida Offers Many ‘Windows to Wellness’ To Its Employees

BY ANGIE BROWN

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, WE KNOW that the quality of our life and the quality of our work are interdependent and, as such, we place a high value on the health and wellbeing of our faculty and staff as well as their families. These values are reflected in our efforts to improve the experience of the talented people who work here and to foster a sense of connection and community among our employees.

A recent review of 62 studies demonstrated that worksite health promotion programs can lead to an average 25 percent reduction each in sick leave, health care costs and disability/workers’ compensation costs (Chapman, 2012). Furthermore, higher perceived workplace health support is associated with higher productivity while at work (Chen et al., 2015). Our impact is greater when UF’s faculty and staff are performing at optimal levels, are able to be fully present, and are supported by a culture that values their health and wellbeing.

As the eighth-ranked public institution of higher education in the country, we know that the personal and professional development of UF employees is critical to our success. UF’s growing employee wellness program is a vital component of a larger institutional plan to effectively recruit and retain employees, cultivate skills and plan for succession to support our ability to innovate as well as to be nimble in a changing demographic and economic landscape.

Ultimately, when we anchor our programming to support UF’s mission to change the world for the better, our vision is to provide a robust wellness program that supports UF’s employees in reaching their highest potential. We recognize that the way this happens varies from one employee to the next — that there are many portals to achieve wellbeing. In partnership with our colleagues at UF Health, we developed an eight-dimensional “Windows to Wellness” model, outlined below, to help our faculty and staff identify the ways to achieve their goals that best meet their individual and ever-changing needs.

EMOTIONAL

Emotional wellness manifests in our ability to meet the world with optimism, trust and a sturdy sense of self-esteem. In addition to UF’s Employee Assistance Program, which provides employees and their dependents six free confidential visits for counseling and referrals, we also offer free depression and alcohol screenings as well as regular educational programs and activities to support our employees’ emotional health.

SOCIAL

With more than 50,000 employees combined, the UF and UF Health community is practically a city unto itself. Employees can find kindred spirits through affiliation networks including the Academic and Professional Association, the Association for Academic Women and the Association of Black Faculty and Staff, among others. Opportunities for social engagement are also available through Reitz Union leisure courses and our outdoor and recreational facilities.

SPIRITUAL

Our spiritual life is an often-overlooked aspect of wellness, but our guiding beliefs, principles and values provide us with deeper meaning and purpose. Faculty and staff are offered opportunities to reconnect through programs offered under the UF Mindfulness initiative, have access to free weekly yoga classes and are encouraged to visit the Baughman Center, which is open for private contemplation on weekdays.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Interdependence with our surroundings and the natural world make the environment an important aspect of our overall wellbeing. Our UF Sustainability program helps to create a

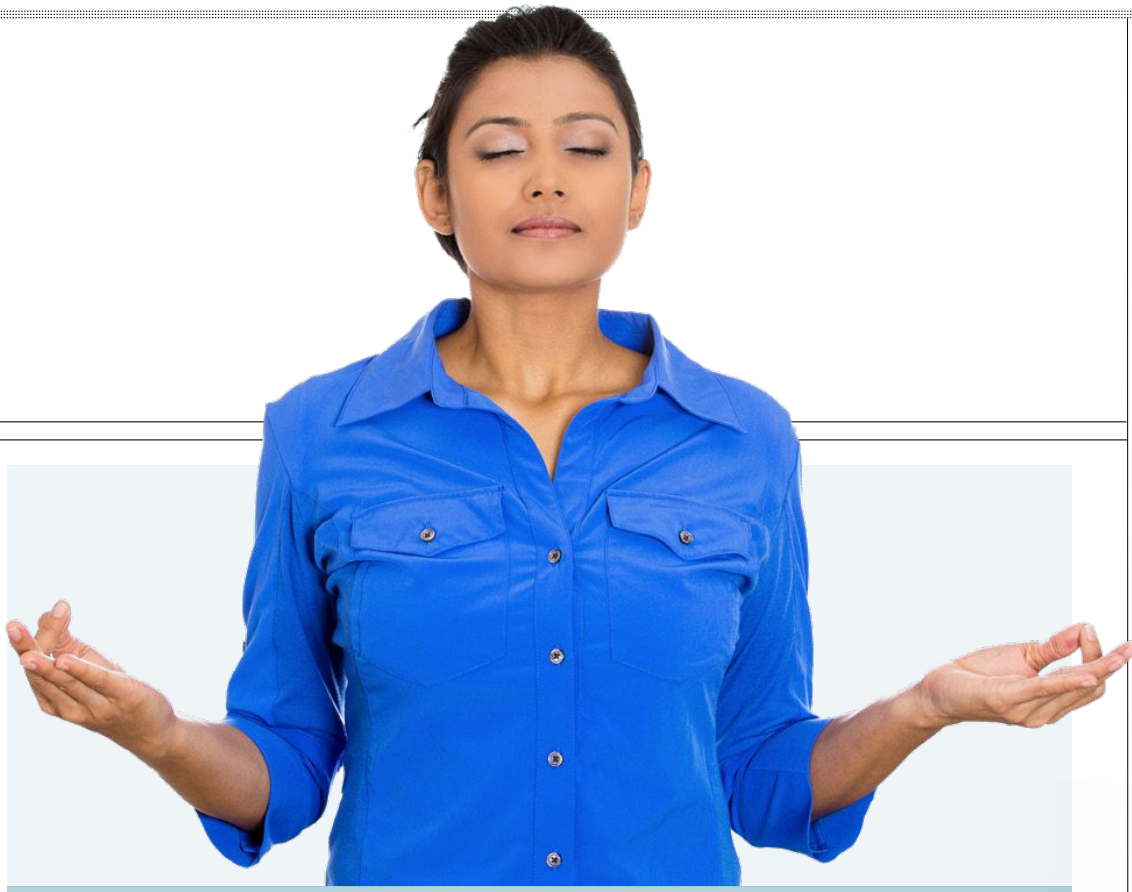


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ABOUT THE WRITER

ANGIE BROWN is the assistant director for Communications and WorkLife for the University of Florida's Office of Human Resources. Additionally, she helps facilitate change management and strategic communications efforts for university initiatives. Angie is co-chair of the UF Healthy Gators Coalition and previously served on the board of directors of the National Consortium for Building Healthy Academic Communities. She has worked in higher education communications for more than 20 years at UF, The Pennsylvania State University and Oregon Health and Science University.



sustainable, high quality of life at UF. And our Field and Fork Farm and Gardens offer opportunities to volunteer in our on-campus garden as well as access to an on-campus community-supported agriculture program.

FINANCIAL

Adopting smart fiscal management practices and preparing for short- and long-term expenses can help ensure we are "fiscally fit." UF Human Resources' Financial Literacy and Retirement Education (FLARE) Program offers online tools and tips to "illuminate the journey to financial security." Our on-campus food pantry and Aid-a-Gator programs also support faculty and staff who may be experiencing temporary need.

OCCUPATIONAL

Our day-to-day work provides personal fulfillment that maximizes our talents. In addition to a robust training program that offers a range of personal and professional development offerings, UF offers comprehensive ergonomic assessments, healthy meeting guidelines and much more to support a healthy workplace culture.

PHYSICAL

Proper nutrition, exercise and disease prevention are some of the most obvious ways we think about wellbeing. A range of programs are available in support of these needs — including free weekly fitness classes, special offerings through our on-campus UF RecSports facilities and services, body composition screenings,

walking challenges and much more.

INTELLECTUAL

As lifetime learners, our intellect is fed by an openness to new ideas, our capacity to think and question and our willingness to master new skills. UF offers its full-time benefits-eligible employees up to six credit-hours of college courses per semester, ample professional development opportunities and access to leisure courses. Children of staff are also eligible for the university's Higher Education Opportunity tuition assistance program. **B**

To learn more about UF's Windows to Wellness and WorkLife at the University of Florida, visit worklife.hr.ufl.edu.